

## WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION CLALLAM COUNTY INTEGRATED VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

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The following items represent key points in a newly developed plan that will guide roadside vegetation management activities on highways throughout Clallam County beginning in 2003. The plan is based on providing a safe highway while minimizing adverse impacts to the environment. An Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) approach is used in this plan. IVM is a planning, monitoring, and evaluation process that utilizes a variety of vegetation management approaches. IVM's goal is to enhance self-sustaining, low-maintenance, native plant communities on the roadside. Healthy, native plants naturally discourage the establishment of unwanted, invasive plant species and promote a higher degree of biodiversity.

**Environmentally Sensitive Roadside Areas:** 166 locations along highways in Clallam County have been identified, mapped, and delineated in the field. These are areas where highways are in close proximity to streams, rivers, wetlands, or other aquatic environments. Within a buffer area of 20 yards from the edge of designated sensitive waterbodies, WSDOT will carry out vegetation management activities with extra consideration for environmental protection as explained below.

**Gravel Shoulder Maintenance:** WSDOT maintains a three-foot vegetation-free zone directly adjacent to the edge of the pavement. This is typically accomplished by annually applying a residual herbicide to the road shoulder. The vegetation-free zone provides stormwater drainage, minimizes vegetation damage to the pavement edge, and serves as a "firebreak" to help minimize roadside brushfires during summer and early fall. *In environmentally sensitive buffer areas, WSDOT will not apply any residual herbicides to maintain a vegetation-free gravel shoulder. Instead, vegetation adjacent to the pavement will be mowed, noxious and nuisance weeds will be treated with herbicides if needed using hand application. When vegetation and soil build up along the pavement edge, it will be physically removed with a blade or other type of equipment.*

**Tree and Brush Control:** WSDOT manages tree and brush growth when such growth begins to interfere with the safe operation of the highway. This is typically accomplished by a combination of mowing, brushing, and herbicide applications from spring through fall. Herbicide applications are typically made from a spray truck while moving slowly along the road shoulder. Maintained trees and brush preserve line-of-sight around curves, to traffic signs, and to traffic entering the highway at intersections.

For all highways in Clallam County, no herbicides will be used for tree and brush control during the spring and summer seasons. Only mowing and brushing will be utilized during these times. An exception to this is the spot application of herbicide to a freshly cut tree stump to prevent re-growth. Herbicides will be used to complement mowing and brushing in the fall season to help finish up tree and brush control work before the onset of winter. *In environmentally-sensitive buffer areas, WSDOT will limit the use of herbicides for tree and brush control to precise, spot applications where needed during*

*the fall season. These applications will be applied with a backpack sprayer or with a hose/reel extension from a truck parked on the roadside. This results in a minimal herbicide application with no overspray since the maintenance worker is standing next to the target plant while carefully applying the herbicide.*

**Noxious Weed Control:** WSDOT, as well as all other property owners, is required by law to control the establishment and proliferation of noxious weeds. Control of these invasive weeds helps preserve the native vegetation of the area and its associated biodiversity. Control of noxious weeds is carried out in coordination with the Clallam County Noxious Weed Board. Treatment methods vary dependent on the type of target plant and the time of year. Herbicide use is, in many cases, the most effective treatment available to eradicate noxious weeds. *In environmentally sensitive buffer areas, WSDOT will limit the use of herbicides for noxious weed control to precise, spot applications where needed. These applications will be applied with a backpack sprayer or with a hose/reel extension from a truck parked on the roadside. This results in a minimal herbicide application with no overspray since the maintenance worker is standing next to the target plant while carefully applying the herbicide.*

**Adopt-a-Highway:** WSDOT is offering citizens an “Adopt-a-Highway” opportunity where they can sign an agreement to voluntarily carry out non-herbicide (i.e. hand pulling, pruning), tree and brush control and noxious weed control activities in an environmentally sensitive area. WSDOT would also provide native plants and soil amendments for vegetation enhancements by volunteers in these areas.

**School Zones:** WSDOT will not apply any residual herbicides to maintain bare gravel shoulders in posted school zones (areas with reduced speed limits in proximity to schools) such as those in Joyce and Clallam Bay.

**Promoting Healthy, Native Vegetation:** WSDOT’s IVM plan improves the precision and selectivity with which non-desirable plants are controlled. This approach minimizes adverse impacts to native, desirable plants and allows them to naturally out-compete non-desirable plant species. Where native roadside vegetation does not interfere with the safe operation of the highway system, it will be left alone to carry out its ecological and aesthetic functions.